G. W. Leibniz, *The Art of Controversies*, ed. Marcelo Dascal. The New Synthese Historical Library, Vol. 60. Dordrecht: Springer 2006, lxxii + 520 pp.

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1. Introduction: Alternative Rhetorics and Dascal's Approach

Meditation and Dialogue

At the beginning of his *Discours de la méthode*, René Descartes compares the sciences of his age to an old town, grown up in a disordered way, or to an ancient building in many ways reshaped by different hands; and he sketches the project of a radical refounding of science, trusting that a brand-new work, conceived of by only one architect, would turn out to be much more beautiful and well-suited. Accordingly, in the following he portrays himself as tackling this ambitious task by isolating himself from the world, cutting bridges with the past and present of his culture, to plunge into a monological meditation.

If this is Descartes' well-known (and historically highly efficacious!) rhetoric, Leibniz's attitude, as it is expressed by his own rhetoric, turns out to be a quite different, if not an opposite one. In all his projects and exhortations for a new universal science – as audacious as Descartes' ones – Leibniz, indeed, is eager to show a collaborative attitude, highly respectful of tradition and looking for all fragments of truth to be found in each philosophical stance. These opposite attitudes – already polemically emphasized by Leibniz himself – have long been pointed out by interpreters.

In Marcelo Dascal's approach, however, the dialogical dimension of Leibniz's thought assumes a new relevance. It is not confined to communicative strategies – 'rhetoric' – or to the extrinsic relationship to other actors in the cultural market. Instead, it turns out to play a key role in the constitution of Leibniz's own philosophical stance. This is far from implausible, given the fact that a great deal of Leibniz's production consists in correspondence, and his involvement in many debates and controversies in the philosophical as well as scientific, theological and political fields. Still, this might simply be a common feature of the then-flourishing *république des lettres*, shared even by less programmatically 'dialogical' thinkers like Descartes himself. What is most important, however, is that some of Leibniz's exchanges appear as true laboratories where he tentatively works out his most

original theses; and some of his important works (like *New Essays* or *Theodicy*) are conceived of and developed as a precise critical counterpoint to someone else's works.

It remains open to further verification, however, to what extent the dialogical form truly reflects something more than a confrontation *post factum* – i.e., after his own systematic view have been articulated – or, at best, the trace of the historical discovering of truth, to consciously express, instead, the intrinsically dynamic way of being of an always open body of knowledge. This verification, however, would require the study of the controversies actually engaged in by Leibniz – a task that Dascal is pursuing elsewhere. Of this great project, the present volume on the 'art of controversies' would represent, rather, the methodological self-conscious side.

Unity and Plurality of Reason(s), and the Role of Formalism

But there is something more at stake, which can be understood, too, in line with the parallel with Descartes. The first of his *Rules* contrasts the alleged plurality of sciences with the fundamental unity of *'the'* science we have to look for. What is more important, this unity depends on the structure and claims of the knowing subject, which replaces, as the organizing leading principle, the idea of shaping the methods of the different sciences according to their different objects. A corollary to this basic shift is the privilege accorded to the mode of evidence – modeled on mathematical intuition – and its promotion as the univocal standard of truth. Its counterpart is, of course, the well-known devaluation of probable knowledge.

This move implied a new delimitation of what deserves the title of true knowledge or science, and a consequent powerful impact on the whole cultural framework of the age – an impact still echoed in Leibniz's time, for instance, by Malebranche's severe judgments on philological and historical erudition. True enough, the mythical image of a Cartesian culture completely dominated by the '*esprit géométrique*' and hostile to historical knowledge has long been rejected by historical reconstruction. Nevertheless, this image actually played a role in the seventeenth century itself; and some of its critics pointed to the alleged one-sideness of the Cartesian mind, and to the need of claiming the rights of probable and historical knowledge. Leibniz does not fail to align himself with this criticism[1]. For his own part, far from restricting himself to the field of what is absolutely certain, he never gets tired of appreciating every bit of knowledge and warns of despising any kind of intellectual activity[2].

This also is well known, of course. And in part it is also something obvious, given

the breadth of Leibniz's interests and activities, ranging from mathematics and logic to historical research, from law interpretation to the theological discussions in view of the reunion of Christian churches. Of course, in each of these domains Leibniz successfully applied different methods and skills. Here also, however, Dascal's approach raises a more penetrating question, that is to say: do all these studies which Leibniz, as a matter of fact, pursued in parallel throughout his whole life, remain somehow external to the ideal of rational knowledge which shapes his brand of 'rationalism'? Or, on the contrary, do they accompany the conscious development of a flexible and plural view of reason – where the latter internally embraces different and equally appreciated methods, shaped on their respective different objects? The second one is Dascal's interpretative assumption (elsewhere expressed by him in the idea of a '*blandior ratio*',[3] the latter being meant to soften Leibniz's alleged 'hard rationalism'). This dilemma perhaps has its full impact if we consider the important interpretative tradition which has recognized the core of Leibniz' philosophical project in the development of a complex of logico-linguistic analyses. In other interpretative approaches, the relevance of the other sides of Leibniz's activity – say, the juridical, or theological one – has always been more present. Still, these different aspects remained, in the best case, side by side as juxtaposed pieces. Dascal's merit has been to vigorously raise, once again, the issue of Leibniz's self-awareness of the unitary sense of his lifelong projects – beyond the sectarian narrowness of our interpretative efforts, or the recurrent temptation of taking this or that aspect of his thought as the all-encompassing one.

The philosophical actuality of this question is due to the fact that, on one hand, Leibniz, the mathematician and logician, can well be seen as the prophet of the 'calculating thought' of our computer age; on the other hand, Leibniz, the jurist and historian, can figure as a great witness for an irreducibly alternative paradigm of reason. In this way, he ideally somehow pre-figures in their roots two great present-day competing models of rationality – say, the logical-analytic and the hermeneutic one. I shall show in a moment the application of both to the art of controversies, which is the focal subject of Dascal's selection.

Before considering its content, a last point has to be made. Leibniz's attitude against the Cartesian 'method' provides us with another important dichotomy, which only partially overlaps the preceding ones. His criticism of the standard of evidence does not only rely on the pluralism of reason, but also on his devaluation of doubt as an epistemological tool. Descartes' radical doubt is contemptuously dismissed as an affected rhetorical device. Actually, this devaluation of doubt is intimately

tied to Leibniz's incomprehension of the topic of freedom. Whereas, for Descartes, method essentially lies in the free exercise of attention, for Leibniz the need of some 'mechanical aid', i.e. of the formal side of thought is constantly emphasized. The contrast of intuitionism and formalism is as much a decisive dichotomy, which crosses the one between mathematical and humanistic knowledge. Dascal – whose first Leibnizian essays were largely devoted to the role of signs in thought – is certainly well aware of this. I think that this interpretative key should never be neglected in the attempt at exploring Leibniz's rational approach to controversies. It will turn out to be, indeed, a unitary feature underlying the variety of objects and methods.

2. *This Collection:* Specimina *for a Multi-faced Leibniz*

The present volume ideally provides a textual basis for the implementation of the interpretative approach I have introduced above. It itself might somehow recall Leibniz's many projects for the reform of science: in this perspective, Dascal's large introductory essay plays the role of those texts where Leibniz sketches the leading ideas of his projects, whereas the rich collection of translated texts would represent the '*specimina*' which give content to the program claims. I confess that the reader is likely to feel some bewilderment, when faced with the heterogeneity of these texts, reinforced by the apparent lack of a systematic classification. I add immediately, however, that this feature seems to be the outcome of a conscious choice, creating, from another point of view, the interest of this collection. If I interpret well the editor's intention, in fact, he aims at giving the reader a glimpse over the whole of Leibniz's interests and projects, as they were growing up impetuously in a parallel way; and in so doing, he tries to break the limits of the disciplinary bounds we impose on Leibniz's multiform activity. Thus, he keeps together logical reflections on one hand, and writings bound with the reunion projects or the improvement of juridical doctrine on the other – hence, types of writings often belonging to different sections of the *Akademie* edition. This circumstance easily hides – even for specialized scholars – not only their factual synchronic character, but also their mutual theoretical resonances. In this perspective, the impression of disorder or puzzlement one might have is, I think, a welcome one, insofar as it captures the situation of a thought in its *état naissant*, still free of the disciplinary cages we are accustomed to put it in.

It is not difficult, however, to distribute the translated writings into some groups:

each one being far from exhaustive, of course, but working as a representative sample of a certain type of text. Moreover, Dascal does not fail to offer us, if not a definite map, some important leading threads. These suggestions can be drawn, of course, from the introductory essay, but also from the useful introductory notes to each translated text.

As the title announces, the unitary framework for these seemingly disparate texts is provided by the idea of an 'art of controversies'. Focusing on the topic of controversies allows one to lead back Leibniz's different projects both to their historical and problematic source – the concrete challenge for his conciliatory attitude, represented by the several controversies of his age – and to a unitary general theme, where these projects themselves can be somehow mutually compared. In general, we are faced on one hand with samples of methodological reflections on the art of controversies, and on the other – especially in the theological field – with some concrete bits of Leibniz's actual involvement in controversies.

As a matter of fact, Dascal's collection (covering more than 400 pages) presents us with 45 chapters, each one corresponding to a single text or to a group of small pieces, grouped together according to their compositive closeness or thematic affinity, and ranging over the whole of Leibniz's career. The expositive order basically follows the chronological one, as far as possible with respect to our ability to date Leibniz's texts. Sometimes, however, texts from different periods are put close in the same chapter because of the affinity of their topic. As far as their sources are concerned, a quick survey of the index of chapters shows that a bit more than the half of them (23) are texts published (often for the first time) in volume VI.4 of the Academy edition. Dascal's re-opening of the question, indeed, is not extraneous, I believe, to the present availability of the whole of materials of the decisive 1676-1690 period, thanks to the masterly edition of volume VI.4, where the breadth and richness of the project of *scientia generalis* displays itself fully. It goes well beyond the limits of Couturat's old selection, which was mainly oriented by the discovery of the formal-logic side of the project. Dascal's provocative challenge is to find within this project itself the plural view of reason I have talked about; moreover, to locate it within the even wider background of Leibniz's interests.

Four other texts had been published in the earlier volumes of the philosophical series. The remaining ones – mostly referring to a later period of Leibniz's activity – belong to his correspondence or the series of political writings. A few of them (4) were available only in Gerhardt's edition, whereas some others could be found in the Grua edition or also in the ancient Dutens.

From a thematical point of view, a third of these texts are drafts commonly classified under the label of '*scientia generalis*': we find here a selection of exhortative writings for 'general science' and the encyclopedia, including the idea of a renewal of logic (ch. N. 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 38, 42), reflections on the art of discovering (ch. 12), and the whole draft *De incerti aestimatione*, the most important Leibnizian piece on the mathematical handling of probability.

An intermediate role is played by a group of drafts expressly devoted to controversies taken in general and from a methodological point of view, hence to the sketch – or at least the wish – of an 'art of controversies' in the most appropriate sense (Ch. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 16, 19).

Another relevant group of drafts (Ch. 2, 6, 7, 25, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 40) deals, instead, with a specific kind of controversies, the religious ones. Here, some methodological reflections are mixed with remarks on special theological topics, and even with some writings (letters, or memoranda, or drafts) which exemplify the strategies Leibniz himself adopts in the related complex debates. Thus, this (ideal) section ranges from the early important discussion on 'the judge of controversies' (Chapter 2) until his private reflections concerning the limits of the 'obligation to believe' (Chapter 6) and some studies or letters which are properly working tools in the diplomatic exchanges for the reconciliation with Catholics or with other Protestant confessions.

Finally, another important type of texts is drawn from juridical contexts (Ch. 5, 11, 36, 39). An exemplar role is given to a rather long writing on the interpretation of law (Ch. 11, which is contained in the section of AVI.4 devoted to ethical and juridical writings.

Finally, we find a couple of texts (ch. 18, 20) centered on the skeptical challenge – a writing on the justification of principles, and a whole dialogue (between the Marquis de Pianèse and Père Emery).

3. Through Controversies to Truth: Some Paths

Art of Controversies and the Recta ratio:
An Anti-Rhetoric Approach to Dialogical Thought?

As a reader of this rich and stimulating collection, I shall now try to react to some of the editor's suggestions and find my way within this rich territory. This seems to me the best way to deal with this work. In so doing, I shall better highlight, I hope,

also Dascal's road map trhough this material, while sometimes, maybe, making use of the latter from a slightly different perspective than Dascal's.

Dascal's work gives impressive evidence of Leibniz's interest in controversies, and of his appreciation of their pedagogical and heuristic value for the unfolding of rational practice (a *locus classicus* for this: NE IV.7, GP V 398-399). This certainly contrasts with the harsh criticism raised by many exponents of modern thought and the scientific revolution – Descartes among them – against the Scholastic tradition of 'disputation'. At the same time, I think that – just reflecting on this rich documentation – the sense of that interest might be further specified and delimited, in particular with respect to the tradition of ancient dialectics and the present day theory of argumentation. Whereas Dascal seems eager to stress their unquestionable contacts, I shall try, rather, to mark some (of course, relative) boundaries. The first aspect to strike the eye – in a sense obvious, but relevant for our concerns – is this: Leibniz's methodological remarks on controversies are chiefly devoted to the working out of strategies for solving them; possibly, to 'finish' them. Surely, this aim is pursued *from within* the practice of controversy itself – differently from the authors who, from the failure of *disputatio*, argued for the need to substitute it by a quite different systematic pursuit of truth. This means, however, that controversies are almost never dealt with by Leibniz from the point of view of one of the competitors, but rather from a third stance, in order to construe, from within the exchange, an objective assessment of the topic at issue. Also the figure of the '*rapporteur*' (though to be accurately distinguished from that of the 'judge'), whose role is emphasized by Dascal by commenting on a 1690 letter on controversies, has to be understood in this perspective – which is not the one of persuasion, directed to a particular kind of hearers, but that of the '*recta ratio*'.

I do not know whether Dascal would fully agree, but I want to stress this (I repeat, rather obvious) aspect, just in order to sharply distinguish this approach from the typical one of the rhetoric tradition, taken again in the present-day logic of argumentation[4]. True enough, the assumptions of the interlocutor are to be taken into account – as Leibniz actually does, e. g. when he is personally involved in theological debates – but mainly in view of their objective handling.

Notice, an understanding of controversies as a play, i.e. as a competitive activity governed by precise rules, is far from absent. But once defined in this way, the controversy has to be used to get truth, or at least to get closer to it. For instance, one can consciously operate under certain assumptions which he/she does not take for granted, and get some conditional or partial conclusions, which are highly useful

(see on this Ch. 37 on the 'method of establishments').

Ordering a Controversy: "Calculemus!"

In order to get a rational assessment of a controversy, one has to put it into order, as Dascal points out. I shall try to develop this suggestion and schematize the great lines of Leibniz's strategy, mainly stressing some unifying features, even beyond what Dascal would probably label as the contrast between 'softer' or 'harder' reasons. The ordering, I mean, is pursued through two very general types of operations: a semantic one, concerning the rigorous definition of the terms involved, and a syntactic one, concerning the logical syntax of the discussion. Now, each of these tasks can be fulfilled in two different ways according to the two great underlying models of rationality I referred to above – the one of calculus and the one of juridical reasoning.

At least since Perelman's work, we are accustomed to contrast the natural (or informal) logic of argumentation – applied in everyday, juridical and political contexts – to the formal-deductive one. We should be a bit cautious in applying this dichotomic scheme to Leibniz, however – be this in order to confine him to one aspect only, but also (like in Dascal's intention) to attribute to him both. Though being well aware of the differences of objects and methods, he seems more inclined to consider the building of knowledge as a continuum, where methods are somehow blended together, under the unifying claim for 'form'.

Consider the 'semantic ordering' of a disputed issue. According to the calculus model, it has to do with a clarification of terms through conceptual analysis. In the juridical model, on the contrary, room is made for typically contextual and hermeneutical procedures, in order to establish the intention of the lawgiver and the spirit of a law: see on this Ch. 11 (*Interpretation and Argumentation in Law*). Interestingly enough, Leibniz is well aware of the import of affective and contextual elements, but once again, he is interested in taking them into account only in order to objectively establish the sense of some statements; admittedly they are to be respected in the case of law, but in a rational evaluation should be discounted. Anyway, Dascal's talk of a 'pragmatic' dimension seems to be much more fitting than the label 'hermeneutic', which might suggest undue associations to a present-day reader.

Syntax, however, is where the characters of the two models – their striking peculiarities, but also their deep continuity – emerge at best. In several texts

– especially the many projects or pieces of advice to general science which are to be found from the end of the Seventies and during the Eighties – the 'solution' of controversies is seen as the application to human disputes of an (admittedly, not further specified) calculistic method. To be sure, we are faced here with a typical rhetorical device, one well-suited for a program manifesto. It is the well-known appeal: "Let us calculate!" which, in Leibniz's intentions, should one day substitute the dialectical methods of dispute so far known. Though being, admittedly, little more than a suggestive slogan, this is a true *leitmotiv*, at least in the type of texts and the period indicated above. Actually, it appears in three texts of Dascal's selection (Ch. 14, 21B, 28) – although, of course, his interpretation is more interested in emphasizing the non-formal aspects of Leibniz's approach. The hope in the calculistic solution, however – dramatically expressed by Leibniz's invitation – can hardly be overestimated in a global evaluation of his approach to controversies. It can also be found, e.g., in the *Initia et specimina scientiae generalis* (A VI.4, N. 85), in the quasi-homonymous *Initia et Specimina scientiae novae generalis* (A VI.4, N. 110), in the *De Elementis veritatis* (A VI.4, N. 111), in the *Ad consitutionem scientiae generalis* (A VI.4, N. 114), or in the *La vraie méthode* (A VI.4, N. 1)[5].

Now, the dreamt-of calculistic solution is always seen as a particular application of the general need for a 'sensible tool' or a mechanical 'Ariadnes' thread', the more indispensable in those fields – such as metaphysical knowledge – where we are lacking the support of experience. To sum up, it is a case of Leibniz's general claim for the value and power of 'form'.

This insight can be documented also in the texts – these also well represented in Dascal's collection – where Leibniz takes a less extreme stance, and limits himself to endorsing a reduction to form along more traditional lines. In practice, he puts forward the reshaping of a discussion in a rigorous syllogistic form – the one usually decried in modern anti-Scholastic criticism. As a matter of fact, this strategy has been adopted in several of Leibniz's discussions, in the scientific as well as in the philosophical field: consider, for instance, his dispute with Papin or his discussion with Molanus.

But also if we consider a more 'natural' argumentative style, Leibniz takes it not as an alternative, but in continuity with the formal reconstruction. Thus, in NE IV.7 (GP V 402-403) he compares the demand for a complete syllogistic way of exposition, making explicit all the general principles ('*maximes*') of our reasoning, to the demand for making a complex count by fingers; at the same time, the more 'natural' logic of ordinary reasoning appears to him as nothing but an enthymematic

chain of syllogisms. This without saying that, in Leibniz's view, the logical form does not coincide with the syllogistic one, but it extends itself beyond its scope. Dascal does not fail to stress all this in his *Introduction*; I only wish to further emphasize how this points to the role of 'form' as a powerful unifying theme, beyond the contrast between what *we* would label as 'logico-formal' or not. [6]

Moreover, the value of form extends also to the juridical model. In NE IV.16, Leibniz takes the juridical *form* exactly as a type of *logical* form: "The whole form of law procedure, indeed, is nothing but a sort of logic applied to legal issues" (GP V 447): that is to say, a form whose respect should prevent one from drawing false (or unjust) consequences from true (or just) premises.

The Logic of the Contingent

As we have seen so far, the two models – that of calculus and that of jurisprudence – work more as the extreme poles, each one spreading its influence over the whole of knowledge, through, respectively, the due weakening or strengthening – than the principles of two sharply delimited, mutually exclusive fields.

As a matter of fact, however, they are also often connected to different spheres: the one concerning necessary truths, the other concerning contingent factual ones and our unavoidably partial empirical knowledge of them. The model of law has a privileged relationship with the latter. In the important text on the 'balance of law (Ch. 5), Leibniz writes: "one should admit as certain that, just as mathematicians have excelled above other mortals in the logic, i.e. the art of reason, of the necessary, so too jurists did in the logic of the contingent … For ultimately, what is a judicial process if not the form of disputing transferred from the Schools to life, purged of vacuousness and limited by public authority in such a way that it is illicit to wander about or to twist or to omit whatever can be shown to be relevant for the search of truth?" (p. 36).

Here also, however, we can detect some peculiar features of the desired 'new logic', which are not far from the ones we have already met in the rational ordering of more classical types of reasoning. First of all, the basis of data for conjectural inferences are *objective* appearances. Leibniz here is eager to distinguish himself from the ancient (Aristotelian and Ciceronian) dialectics of *Topics*, where the *endoxa* play an important role. By the way, this marks also his distance from 'probabilism' as taken in the moral theology of his age (to which Dascal devotes chapter 32): "The flaw of the relaxed moral theologians is that they had too narrow

and unsatisfying a notion of what is probable, which they confused with the *endoxon*, or what Aristotle took for a plausible opinion. In his *Topics*, however, Aristotle did nothing but accommodate himself to the of opinions the others, exactly as orators and sophists were accustomed to… What is probable, however, is far wider, and it has to be drawn from the nature of things…" (NE IV.2, GP V 353). Moreover, the Port-Royal distinction between internal motives for probability (appearances) and external ones (testimonies) is assumed by him. Leibniz does not neglect the second ones; on the contrary, he tries to subject them also to some objective weighing. This double root is connected to a double type of formal procedure to work out data, which presents again, within the field of contingent, the dichotomy of models we are familiar with.

On one hand, we have the extension to the probable of the model of calculus – admittedly, suitably weakened, but keeping firm mathematical rigor. We find here, of course, Leibniz's interest in the arising mathematical treatment of probability, such as it reflects in his own study *De incerti aestimatione*. On the other hand, Dascal is quite right in stressing the irreducibility to mathematical treatment of another sphere, the most important for the practical conduct of human life. The envisaged 'logic of contingency' – whose model is sought by Leibniz in juridical practice and thought – cannot be reduced to a kind of calculus. I do not think that this decisive limitation can be simply drawn from the fortunate metaphor of 'balance' – as Dascal seems sometimes to suggest, if I understand him correctly – according to which 'reasons are not to be counted, but to be weighed'. The model of balance, indeed, is well-suited for an entirely deterministic procedure, hence also for a calculistic interpretation of the process of decision-making. Anyway, in the process of 'weighing' reasons, some aspects do actually enter, which remain outside the scope of mathematical treatment. Thus, the evaluation of clues and testimonies seems to be more reluctant to quantification. Here what is peculiar to juridical logic becomes decisive.

It is worth noticing, however, that Leibniz on many occasions does blend these different aspects of the logic of contingent without problems (see, for instance, the illustration of this topic in NE IV.15, where he shifts at ease from juridical clues to medical symptoms to the probability of random events like throws of the dice).
It hardly needs to be specified how the logic of testimony plays a key role in the epistemology of historical knowledge. Leibniz, the historian, purports the establishment of the new 'critical art', implicitly taking a stand against the threat of 'historical Pyrrhonism'.

Finally, in the context of the specific contribution of juridical logic, an important role is played by the study of the asymmetrical distribution of the respective weight of reasons, and in particular of the burden of proof. To this aspect the logic of presumption pertains, on which Dascal has for long called attention. It is illustrated in this collection by the exchange with Werlof (Chapter 36) – where Dascal shows exactly its technical application within the field of law. But its most important application is to the theodicy debate. Chapter 41 illustrates this usage somewhat indirectly, due to Dascal's decision of not including in his collection texts drawn from major works.

On the basis of these indications, however, the reader could easily pass to the *Preliminary Discourse* of *Theodicy*. There the theme of presumption appears, at first, as an element of disanology between juridical practice and theodicy, and as a source of objection against 'God's cause'. In human jurisprudence, Leibniz remarks, presumptions based on verisimilitude have room, but they are not legitimate in the case of divine mysteries, which are by definition beyond any verisimilitude. In the following, however, the argumentative role of presumption is overturned, insofar as God's innocence turns out to be exactly a very strong presumption. Here it is worth noting that the logic of presumption – and the shift of the burden of proof to the objector, which is the central move in Leibniz's reply to Bayle – is not only based on a kind of arbitrary rule of play, simply taken from the practice of disputes. On the contrary, it has, in its turn, a rational justification. Interestingly enough, this is presented at first as grounded on demonstrative reasons (divine perfection can be demonstrated, so that it will defeat every merely probable objection); but a few lines after, it seems to be, in its turn, the object of a moral certitude: "in this person we find qualities so admirable that, on the basis of a correct logic of verisimilitude, we have to trust more to his word than to the testimony of many other people…" (*Theodicy*, *Preliminary Discourse*, § 37, GP VI, 70-71). In both cases, the favorable position acknowledged to one interlocutor according to the logic of dispute is also rationally accounted for.

As far as religious debates are concerned, Leibniz's theoretical (anti-Cartesian) delimitation of the role of will in judgment underlies his criticism of the 'obligation to believe', hence his endorsement of a tolerant attitude. His comprehension of tolerance, however, goes beyond giving up violence, and basically parts his way from the Lockean winning 'political' model, as Dascal interestingly points out in his *Introduction*. For Leibniz, indeed, tolerance, far from presupposing the neutralization of divergent views, hence the indifference for their truth value, is

the basis for a further attempt at pursuing – exactly through the method of rational discussion – the recovery of consensus on a higher level. In this way, Leibniz's project appears a suggestive one also for today, as a sustained strenuous attempt at working out – beyond the opposite cliffs of dogmatism and relativism – rational strategies to compare apparently incommensurable views. To call attention to this lesson is not the least merit of this rich and stimulating book.

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Notes

[1] His reproach to Descartes in this concern, however, bears usually on the strained usage of doubt within Cartesian intuitionism; he argues, instead, for the extension of formal rational procedures to the field of probable knowledge, as we shall see.
[2] More specifically, Leibniz was profoundly sensitive to the incipient cultural fracture of his age: a kind of 'two-cultures' problem *ante litteram*, such as is depicted, for instance, in the interesting text *De statu praesenti eruditionis* – where he challenges the opposite one-sideness of scientists and historians, by reading their contrast through the truths of reason/truths of fact dichotomy, and endorses the broadening of reason to include critical historical reconstruction. On this see later. The same topic is dealt with in the *Nouvelles Ouvertures* (Ch. 24 of Dascal's collection).
[3] The '*blandior ratio*' Leibniz refers to, is actually nothing but a 'mode of proceding', as Dascal correctly translates (Ch. 15, page 133) – analogously to Descartes' well-known distinction, in his *II Replies*, of different ways (*rationes*) of presenting matters within the more general geometrical order (*ordo*).
[4] Of course, interest in rhetorical techniques is far from absent in Leibniz's remarks, but they are sharply distinguished from the objective rational treatment of a dispute.
[5] By the way, I would suggest a slightly modified translation for one passage concerning the mathematical model in philosophy. In Ch. 14, p. 123 Dascal has: "had he [sc. Descartes] seen the mode of building a rational and arithmetical

philosophy as clearly and incontestably [as œ do]", whereas I would read: "had he seen the mode of building a rational philosophy as clearly and incontestably as arithmetics".The Latin reads: "si vidisset modum constituendi philosophiam rationalem eque clare et irrefragabiliter ac arithmeticam" (A VI.4,

[6] If we want, Leibniz is eager to substitute a plurality of 'forms' to the plurality of mental 'attitudes' assumed in Descartes' method.